

# Det förlorade paradiset

## - en studie i Göran Tunströms Sunneromaner

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Akademisk avhandling för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen fredagen den  
21 november år 2003 kl. 13.15 i Lilla hörsalen, Humanisten, Göteborgs  
universitet, Renströmsgatan 6, Göteborg

Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen  
Göteborgs universitet

**Title: *Det förlorade paradiset. En studie i Göran Tunströms Sunneromaner***  
**(‘Paradise lost. A Study of the Sunne Novels of Göran Tunström’)**  
260 p. ISSN 0348-4653 : 44 ISBN 91 86270 796

Language: Swedish, with a Summary in English

The writings of Göran Tunström (1937 – 2000) are closely linked with his birthplace, Sunne in Värmland. His four ‘Sunne Novels’, *De heliga geograferna* (1973; ‘The Holy Geographers’), *Guddöttrarna* (1976; ‘The Goddaughters’), *Juloratoriet* (1983; *The Christmas Oratorio*, 1995) and *Tjuven* (1986; ‘The Thief’) form the subject of this thesis. The focus is on the novels as an entity, an ‘epic universe’, a micro-/macrocosmos, examined from five different aspects: space, time, literary models, poetics and ethics.

The first part of the thesis concentrates on Sunne, and both the inward and outward significance of place. Topographical descriptions and place-names use physical surroundings as their starting point, but here the analysis is structured phenomenologically, on what Gaston Bachelard calls ‘topoanalysis’: i.e. Sunne is seen both subjectively and objectively.

In the second part the significance of the time dimension in its epic configuration is examined. The hypothesis is that there is a typological structure in the Sunne novels corresponding to the Genesis and Apocalypse of the Bible.

The third part looks at the significance of the work of two writers, Selma Lagerlöf and Lars Ahlin, whose production can be seen as literary models.

The fourth part considers the poetics of the Sunne novels. The main issue is narratological and discusses the kind of prose used, the various literary patterns, genres, motifs and rhetorical figures that appear, and the sorts of meaning created thereby. An expression often used throughout the Sunne novels is ‘turning round’: a trope implying transgression, recognition, identification and perception, awareness, and knowledge. In these novels different literary and mythical traditions are interwoven using various narratological devices. The relation to tradition may be described as parody.

The fifth and last part of the thesis looks at the narrator and the ethical discourse in the Sunne novels. It considers both the relation between the narrator and his creativity in terms of self-examination and identity, and the ethical question as to how one ought to live. Elements of the philosophy of existence can characteristically be related to the work of Lars Ahlin and Søren Kierkegaard. The ethical analysis is based, as with Martha Nussbaum, on the fundamental question as to how one becomes, and remains, a true and living person.

By investigating the relation between subject and object in creative, artistic practice, contact with reality is obtained as well as truth and individuality. The confessional element in the narrative context points towards this and also contributes to the therapeutic character of the novels. The relation between

imagination and reality resolves itself into an acceptance of 'both - and'.  
'Humour' as an attitude to life means the ability to accommodate a 'both-and' stance without losing perception and consciousness and also leads to self-fulfilment and fellowship.

*Key words:* Göran Tunström, Comparative Literature, Phenomenology, Micro-/macrocosmos, the Bible, Typology, Poetics, Aesthetics, Narratology, Ethics